

LIVINSON, ABRAHAM J.

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Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

A.J. Livinson

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection
(formerly referenced as Manuscript Files)

*With my
compliments
A. J.*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN MONTREAL

By

A. J. LIVINSON

The recent commemoration of the birth of "the Great Emancipator" who was born one hundred and thirty-five years ago, in an obscure and humble log cabin in the American wilds of Kentucky - of Abraham Lincoln's birthday (February 12th, 1809), and the fine exhibit on Lincoln's career, especially arranged for the anniversary by Dr. G. R. Lomer, now to be seen at the Redpath Library of McGill University in Montreal, calls to mind a number of things worth saying about Lincoln in Montreal:

of

One of the finest engravings of Lincoln extant is to be seen in a leading law office located atop the skyscraping Aldred Building, in old down-town Montreal. It is truly one of the gems of portraiture, and I doubt if there are many to equal it in draughtsmanship and craftsmanship. When I last saw it, I was so captivated by it that I felt as if I would like to take it off the corridor wall and hop along home with it to my Lincoln den. But this never materialized: alas the picture was too big, and the defenders of Justice were too close to me!

In my own little collection, gathered these many years, I have some grand items about the 16th President of the United States, the American Liberator who played so significant a part in hastening and helping to launch Canada's Confederation of 1867, which was consummated two years after Lincoln was assassinated in that Ford's Theatre in Washington, on sad sacred Good Friday.

There must be quite a few citizens of Montreal who, as Lincoln students, gathered up pictures, clippings, and books about this wonderful and miraculous man. Let's hope that the day is not too distant when we shall have a Montreal Lincoln Group, as there

are organized in many American cities from New York to Los Angeles, -- a group where citizens could meet and chat about the treasures and finds that they possess about Lincoln's tragic, yet immensely creative, life.

McGill University has an all-embracing nucleus of Lincolniana in the "Marcuse Lincoln Collection." The number of books on Lincoln is also increasing in McGill's Peter Redpath Library. In McGill's "Learmont Collection" there is a rare & valuable signature of Lincoln's, which is well worth seeing. However, we are a long ways off in Montreal from approximating the size and measure of the Lincoln collections, let us say, at the Lincoln National Life Foundation at Fort Wayne, Indiana; or that most outstanding and comprehensive "Department of Lincolniana" at the Lincoln Memorial University, at Harrogate, Tennessee, so ably tended by Professor R. Gerald McMurtry, as well as other important Lincoln centres throughout the United States, which I might name. But we in Montreal will reach such statures some day. I hope that McGill University will again score as a pioneering pathfinder and prosper greatly in that Lincolnian pathway.

I must not omit stating that in the office of the Hon. Homer M. Byington, United States Consulate General in Montreal, there is a priceless signature of Lincoln, perhaps the only holograph of its kind in Canada.

To conclude these remarks, one ought to add that Montreal's own immortal author, Stephen Leacock, who is so closely bound up with McGill University's history, has written a book on Lincoln, which, relatively speaking, easily ranks with the best one-volume books ever written about the "deified" Lincoln who freed the slaves.

It is to be noted that Lincoln was a fond admirer of Robert

Burns, Scotland's glory and the world's democrat,--so that when James Grant Wilson presented Lincoln a copy of Halleck's "Poetical Works," Lincoln wrote back to Wilson, on May 2nd, 1860, as follows: "I am greatly obliged for the volume of your friend ⁽¹⁷⁹⁰⁻¹⁸⁶⁷⁾ Fitz-Greene Halleck's poems. Many a month has passed, since I have met with anything more admirable than his beautiful lines on Burns. . . ." So, all in all, to resume, I may add that we are not doing so badly in the domain of Lincolniana in Montreal. Perhaps all that remains to be done, I should suppose, is to do the noble international gesture and to place a Lincoln statue in our delightful and sincerely national and imperial Dominion Square. There, ^{of an effigy already erected, --} Lincoln in bronze will keep the kindly company ^{of another} lonely "Lover of Freedom" and "Friend of Universal Freedom" -- that Scot of Scots, our own Robert Burns.

END

Written by

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*A. Jacob Livinson
Feb. 17 44.*

R. A. Lincoln

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